News From Somewhere

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Alphistia As It Might Be

Imagine it is 15-20 years from now, and Alphistia has been established somewhere safe, away from Mad Max America. Here is a short description of what that could be like:

Our homeland is a very small part of the world, but it is important to us. When we are away from Alphistia, we get homesick. We miss the sound of our own language, the beautiful countryside, and our pleasant towns. We miss the love for learning of our fellow citizens, and the rich cultural life in our country. We miss the clean air and the quiet that comes from using electric cars, buses and trains. We miss the measured pace of life that comes from balancing work and leisure.

Our homeland is unique in these and many other ways. Many people around the world today live in places, not communities, and while they are citizens of countries, they do not have the sense of belonging that our Alphistia gives us. It's no wonder that we are glad to come home.

Our home is truly a homeland, not just because it is the country where we live, but because we created it and have developed it ourselves. The result is a country in which we are cared for and where we care for one another. We have given ourselves and our children the chance to learn all through life, enrich our distinct culture, and work with dignity.

In our country, everyone is secure in the knowledge that children grow up in a healthy environment and attend good schools. They will not only prepare for their working lives, but become cultured citizens. As adults, they have the security of a job, but also adequate time for their personal lives. And they can grow old in security and comfort as well.

How is it that we have these benefits? The answer is that we have chosen to have a society like this and have worked to achieve it.

We live in peace and safety under the rule of law. We have democratic elections and our lives are not subject to undemocratic political and economic forces outside our

borders and beyond our control. Our constitution guarantees us the full range of civil and human rights, and we have a national consensus which includes social rights that are legislated and regulated for the benefit of all.

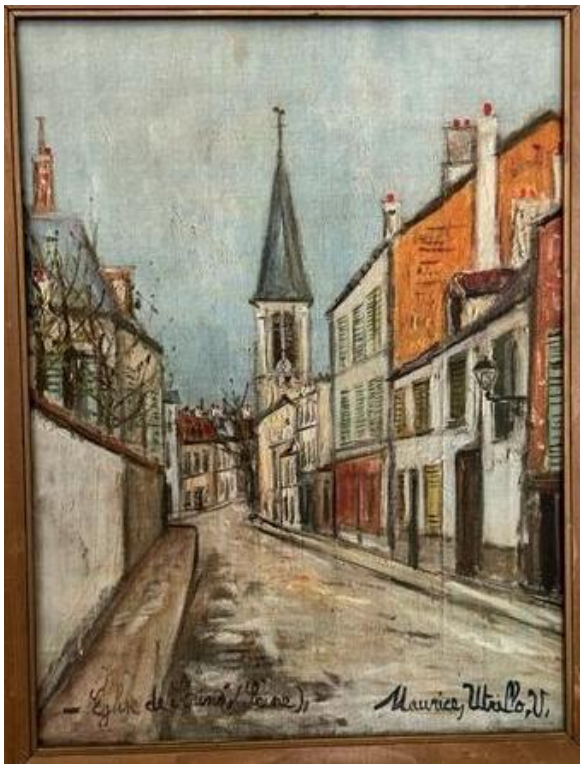
Since we chose our territory and developed Alphistia ourselves, we nurture our natural resources and protect our environment. We live with our world, not against it, and the beauty of our countryside and our towns shows that we have succeeded.

It is obvious that we have built a country that we are happy to live in and return to. We believe it is important to preserve and protect it.

Pushkin These Days

Pushkin is a loving cat who I found in the parking lot of my apartment building Labor Day Weekend in 2018. He'd either been left there by some cruel humans or had gotten out of wherever he used to live. He was very affectionate and came up to me letting out a sweet and pathetic meow. I took him in…it was obvious he was hungry, it was very hot, and he was desperate. Almost 7 years later and he is just about the happiest cat in the world. You can tell he appreciates his "lifestyle" now, just full of love.

Utrillo Print



When I was 6 years old, a neighbor had an inexpensive print from a local dimestore. It hung above a bookshelf in her living room. I admired the painting, one of many hundreds of works by the French post-Impressionist, Maurice Utrillo. I wanted to walk down that street myself. I remember when I was looking at it one time when my mom took me over to Verne's house and I asked her: "Could we go there?" My mother said "No sweetie, that's very far away in France". Years later I found a framed print of it, which is now hanging in my living room, above a

bookcase. It's called "Eglise de Stains", a church in a Paris suburban town.

Some Thoughts on the Near Future

Alphistia is an imagined country, but in recent years I have imagined it as a place that could very well exist in the near/mid future, maybe 15-20 years down the road. I probably won't make it to live there, as I am 67 years old. And even if I do, I would not be anyone more than its Founder. I have no political skills, and just have to leave that to those who do, along with fundraising skills, diplomatic skills, and economics skills…

Right now, there are "two Alphistias" projected in my mind's eye …a small one-mile square community in the near future of about 2000 people, who would live according to Alphistian ideals and plan the creation of the Alphistian homeland, a country of about 350 square miles and about 250,000 people. There would be no Alphistian Empire. It would be a microstate, bigger than San Marino or Liechtenstein, but smaller than Luxembourg or Malta. Where? That is to be determined as history proceeds.

It would have a mixed economy, primarily made up of for-profit (and non-profit!) co-operatives plus private small businesses. As small businesses grow, they would transform into co-ops. This would allow for innovation, but avoid the evils of oligarchy. Alphistia's companies would be about 70% co-ops, 20% state-owned (mostly natural resources and infrastructure), and 10% small private businesses.

Alphistia's economy would be focused on being sustainably green. It would use carbon-based energy at an absolute minimum, and would instead focus on hydropower, solar power, and wind power. Its railways would be electrified, and so would all motor transport. Most Alphistians would use the trains, trams (in the three largest towns) and e-buses to get around, as well as bicycles and clout, instead of the atomized individuals trying to protect their economic and social rights as is the "norm" in countries like the US, with very low union membership rates.

Alphistia would be a traditional social-democratic welfare state the way Sweden and the Netherlands were before the neo-liberal fads since the 1980s. Access to healthcare would be universal and not connected to work, all would have insurance through the national health

service. The normal workweek would be 4 days per week, 7 or 8 hours per day. The minimum annual vacation would be 20 working days (5 weeks per year). All would have pensions at retirement, or disability pensions if due to illness or accidents.

Housing would consist largely of non-profit rented apartments built by co-ops. This would make up about 90% of the country's homes. About 10% would be privately owned apartments or individual houses, mostly in rural areas and small towns. There would not be many high-rise towers. Most Alphistians would prefer to live in smaller apartment buildings (garden style)...the "quad" apartments are most popular…two bedroom apartments in two floor buildings of four units each, grouped around inner gardens, circles, or squares. Very human-scaled, just like Alphistia's towns.

Within the next 5-10 years upheaval will continue worldwide. We live in a uniquely evil period of history, not unlike the 1930s and 1940s. I believe trump will be dead within 5 years (perhaps sooner), and that his dreadful VP will be marginalized due to his character defects and lack of "charisma". Putin too will not live forever; Russian men have very low life expectancies after all. Musk will be exiled to Mars.

The Far Right has a pet theory that nation-states as we know them can be transformed into many smaller city-states, which then can be run like "monarchies" (actually they would be corporate fascist states ruled by oligarchic autocrats). While this faction (it includes J D Vance and Peter Thiel) would not likely be able to take over the entire world, they could conceivably create a network of city-states: fiefdoms really, with a "symbolic" national state called the USA but without real power. In reality there would be networks of mini-fascist states. There would be no political democracy, human rights, or social welfare. The only civil "right" this form of the Far Right acknowledges is the Right to Exit, i.e. make yourself a refugee.

This must assume that OTHER models will still exist, and they probably will. Whether any non-fascist city-states can exist in a world of aggressive fascist entities would be like any era in human history…warfare would of course not go away, imperialism and power politics would exist.

But in theory, some nation-states would probably survive, such as ethno-states like China, multi-ethnic unitary dictatorships like Russia, perhaps even something like the EU, but with many more smaller states as members. And theoretically, a country like Alphistia could come into being, somewhere in the margins, under the radar.

Comments welcome at:
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